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Summary record of the 48th meeting
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Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 123: Programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 (*continued*)

Estimates in respect of matters of which the Security Council is seized (*continued*) (A/56/7/Add.8, A/C.5/56/25/Add.3)

1. **The Chairman** said that, in the absence of any further comments, he would take it that the Committee had concluded its general discussion on the issue.

2. *It was so decided.*

Agenda item 158: Financing of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (*continued*) (A/56/660, A/56/688 and A/56/845)

3. **Mr. Loedel** (Uruguay) said that his Government attached particular importance to agenda item 158 and was demonstrating its commitment to peace in the region by its significant participation in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC); it currently had 1,062 troops assigned to the Mission, and had signed five of the current memorandums of understanding.

4. Although the report of the Advisory Committee (A/56/845) had been issued late, it provided important clarification in analysing a confusing budget document. Uruguay supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations and could endorse the proposed additional appropriation for MONUC of $56,757,600.

5. The lack of transparency and irregularities in the procurement system were confirmed once again by the award of the air service contract to Pacific Architects and Engineers Inc. (PAE)/Daher International Transport. There was also a lack of clarity in the procurement process for water treatment plants. The process required further major adjustments and appropriate monitoring.

6. Uruguay fully endorsed the Advisory Committee's comments in paragraph 21 of its report (A/56/845) and the decision of MONUC to expedite installation of water treatment plants in locations of contingent and other MONUC operation centres as a means of reducing water procurement and transportation costs.

7. With regard to paragraph 23, his delegation hoped that in reviewing the mission subsistence rates, the Office of Human Resources Management would take into account the significant cost variations in different parts of the region.

8. His delegation was concerned about the financial implications of the proposal to deploy 147 of the 170 United Nations Volunteers to the administrative component of MONUC and about the relevance of that proposal in such areas as transport, communications and medical services, which were normally covered by the contingents.

9. In general, the Advisory Committee's recommendations should be the guide in ensuring adequate resources for MONUC and enabling the Mission it to carry out the tasks assigned to it by the Security Council.

10. **Mr. Kadiri** (Morocco) drew attention to the apparently insoluble problem of the late issuance of documents, which had adverse consequences for delegations.

11. His Government fully supported MONUC and the efforts of the Secretary-General to restore peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The tasks entrusted to MONUC were multiple, varied and crucial to the return of stability in that country and the Mission should therefore have the necessary financial and human resources to carry out its mandate.

12. His delegation noted certain gaps in the justification for some of the new posts requested by the Mission, but was aware of the urgent need for them. The Secretariat, however, should take into account the Advisory Committee's recommendations in that regard in its next budget presentation and rectify the errors and omissions in the budget document noted by the Advisory Committee. His delegation was concerned about the information contained in paragraphs 84 to 99 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/56/845) and would welcome clarification from the Secretariat.

13. **Mr. Mumbey-Wafula** (Uganda) said that his delegation attached great importance to the Organization's efforts to resolve the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by making MONUC fully operational. However, the level of resources committed to MONUC was too low and implementation of phase III needed to be accelerated through increased involvement of MONUC in

promoting national dialogue and quicker implementation of the programme of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reinsertion of armed groups. Regrettably, MONUC did not have sufficient human and financial resources to take over the positions currently held by Uganda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Member States should address that problem urgently, so that Ugandan troops could withdraw. Given the magnitude of the task assigned to MONUC, it was surprising that the Secretariat had been unable to justify some of its requests for posts. The Secretariat should clarify the difficulties it had faced in that regard. His delegation supported measures for the efficient and effective use of resources and therefore agreed with the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the air service contract should be reviewed.

14. The slow pace of response to crisis situations in Africa was a matter of concern and Member States should take the necessary action to reverse that pattern. Enhanced participation by MONUC in implementing the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement would go a long way towards restoring peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

15. **Mr. Chandra** (India) echoed the concerns expressed by other delegations about the format and presentation of the budget for MONUC contained in document A/56/660. He looked forward to receiving answers to previous questions about the $34 million air service contract and the implications of the budget reduction recommended by the Advisory Committee. His delegation would raise the issue of the mission subsistence allowance in informal consultations, including its link with operational effectiveness in peacekeeping missions.

16. **Mr. Sheehan** (Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Logistics, Management and Mine Action Service) said he shared the Committee's concerns about the air service contract; the Department of Peacekeeping Operations was taking firm action to deal with the problems noted. Two new senior staff members, who had been appointed to the Department in 2002, were reviewing all aspects of the contract in coordination with the Department of Management and MONUC. The relevant experts would provide the Committee with more detailed information on contractual matters.

17. MONUC was not only the largest and most complex logistical operation ever undertaken by the United Nations but it had also been mounted without the participation of military units from developed countries, in contrast to all the other large peacekeeping operations. One of the initial aims of MONUC had been to station large units throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo to provide protection for observers. In addition, a massive airlifting operation had been undertaken to distribute huge quantities of fuel across the country, since air transport was the only feasible means of distribution in a country whose infrastructure had been completely destroyed by years of war and neglect.

18. While aviation standards in the MONUC area were far lower than those in the best international airports, they were higher than those of the most basic "bush" aviation, which were characterized by a total lack of communications, air traffic control and security and safety procedures. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations continuously strove to upgrade safety standards, but a degree of risk was always involved in peacekeeping operations, because deployment could not be postponed until international standards were reached. The Department's primary concern was the safety of its staff, even though that sometimes led to disputes with the contractors who provided air transport services.

19. In East Timor, the Australian army had initially taken the lead role in setting up a professional air operation. The Australian Government had then agreed to maintain the operation until the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) had been fully established. UNTAET had replaced the Australian operation with a number of contractual arrangements, which were now on the whole functioning smoothly. There was still some risk involved in flying in and out of the mission area, but safety standards were generally good. In contrast, MONUC faced huge difficulties. For example, the airport at Kindu, some 1,500 miles from the capital, consisted of a strip of asphalt controlled by an army faction. MONUC planned to land huge quantities of jet fuel there in the coming months — a highly hazardous operation which was complicated by the army's unwillingness to cooperate.

20. MONUC was obliged to use contractual services because it would take too long to recruit staff through the traditional method of placing vacancy

announcements. Moreover, though it would be preferable to have an army from Member States, no State had volunteered to provide such support, apart from South Africa, whose contribution was not sufficient to cover every need. Before the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (the Brahimi report) had been issued, the Department of Management had been responsible for all contracts. However, there was now a small unit in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations responsible for managing the procurement process in conjunction with the Department of Management. He understood the concerns expressed about the use of contractual services. However, MONUC's safety standards were currently the worst of all the Organization's peacekeeping operations and if the Missions did not use contractual services, it would remain a "bush" operation. Furthermore, while MONUC staff welcomed oversight, he was concerned that their ability to take effective decisions would be paralysed if their integrity was continually called into question.

21. **Mr. Toh** (Officer-in-Charge, Procurement Division) said that he and his staff had reviewed the process by which the air service contract had been awarded and he personally was satisfied that the established procurement rules had been respected. The process had been thorough and had taken several months to finalize.

22. **Ms. Pollard** (Deputy Director, Peacekeeping Financing Division), responding to questions raised by Committee members, said that the budget of $450 million recommended for MONUC in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/56/845) was a gross figure; the net equivalent was $442,773,800. With reference to paragraph 75 of the report, the air service contract had been provided for under the air operations section of the budget rather than the contractual services section. A reply to the question regarding the adequacy of the $450 million budget proposal would be provided in informal consultations.

23. **Mr. Chandra** (India), referring to paragraph 89 of the Advisory Committee's report (A/56/845), noted that his question about the errors in the information provided to the Advisory Committee had not been answered. However, he would be happy for an answer to be given in informal consultations.

24. **Mr. Toh** (Officer-in-Charge, Procurement Division) emphasized that the procurement rules referred to the awarding of contracts to the lowest technically compliant bidder. Bids that did not comply with the relevant requirements were not considered. After extensive discussions, the air service contract had been awarded to PAE/Daher, which had submitted the lowest technically compliant bid. While he understood the concerns that had been raised about the inconsistencies, it was particularly difficult to accurately anticipate requirements in new missions. Contracts therefore needed to be flexible so that changes in requirements could be accommodated. He was satisfied that the PAE/Daher contract fulfilled that criterion.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.